A

PLATFORM

OF

Church-Diſcipline

Gathered out of

THE WORD OF GOD;

And Agreed upon by the

Elders and *Meſſengers*

of the Churches Aſſembled in the

SYNOD.

At *Cambridge* in *N.E.*

To be preſented to the Churches & General Court for their Conſideration and Acceptance in the Lord, the 8*th.* Moneth, *Anno.* 1649.

Pſal. 84. 1. *How amiable are thy tabernacles, O Lord of Hoſts.*

Pſal. 26. 8. *Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy houſe, and the place where thine honour dwelleth.*

Pſal. 27. 4. *One thing have I deſired of the Lord, that I will ſeek after: that I may dwel in the houſe of the Lord all the dayes of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in his Temple.*

Boſton: Printed by *John Foſter.* 168●.

THE PREFACE.

THE ſetting forth of the publick Confeſſion of the Faith of Churches hath a double end, and both tending to Publick Edification: Firſt, the maintainance of the Faith intire within it ſelf: Secondly, the holding forth of Unity and Harmony, both amongſt, & with other Churches. Our Churches here, as (by the grace of Chriſt) we believe and profeſs the ſame Doctrine of the truth of the Goſpel, which generally is received in all the Reformed Churches of Chriſt in *Europe*: ſo eſpecially we deſire not to vary from the Doctrine of Faith and Truth held forth by the Churches of our Native Country. For though it be not one Native Country that can breed us all of one mind; nor ought we to have the glorious Faith of our Lord Jeſus with reſpect of Perſons, yet as *Paul*, who was himſelf a Jew, profeſſed to hold forth the Doctrine of Juſtification by Faith, and of the Reſurrection of the dead, according as he knew his godly Countrymen did, who were Jews by nature (*Gal.* 2. 15. *Act.* 26. 6, 7.) ſo we, who are by nature *Engliſh-men*, doe deſire to hold forth the ſame Doctrine of Religion (eſpecially in Fundamentals) which we ſee and know to be held

held by the Churches of *England*, according to the truth of the Goſpel.

The more we diſcern (that which we do, and have cauſe to do with inceſſant mourning and trembling) the unkind, and unbrotherly, and unchriſtian contentions of our godly Brethren and Countrymen, in matters of Church Government; the more earneſtly do we deſire to ſee them joyned together in one common Faith, and our ſelves with them. For this end, having peruſed the publick Confeſſion of the Faith, agreed upon by the Reverend Aſſembly of Divines at *Weſtminſter*, and finding the Sum, and Subſtance thereof (in matters of Doctrine) to expreſs not their own Judgment only, but ours alſo: and being likewiſe called upon by our godly Magiſtrates, to draw up a publick Confeſſion of that Faith which is conſtantly taught, and generally profeſſed amongſt us; we thought good to preſent unto them, and with them to our Churches, and with them to all the Churches of Chriſt abroad, our profeſſed and hearty Aſſent and Atteſtation to the whole Confeſſion of Faith (for ſubſtance of Doctrine) which the Reverend Aſſembly preſented to the Religious and Honourable Parliament of *England*: Excepting only ſome Sections in the 25, 30, and 31 Chapters of their Confeſſion, which concern Points of Controverſie in Church Diſcipline; touching which, we refer our ſelves to the

the draught of Church Diſcipline in the enſuing Treatiſe.

The truth of what we here declare, may appear by the unanimous vote of the Synod of the Elders and Meſſengers of our Churches aſſembled at *Cambridge* the laſt of the *ſixth Month* 1648. which joyntly paſſed in theſe words: *This Synod having peruſed and conſidered (with much gladneſs of heart, and thankfulneſs to God) the Confeſſion of Faith publiſhed of late by the Reverend Aſſembly in England, doe judge it to be very holy, orthodox, and judicious in all matters of Faith: and doe therefore freely and fully conſent thereunto, for the ſubſtance thereof. Onely in thoſe things which have reſpect to Church Government and Diſcipline, we refer our ſelves to the Platform of Church-Diſcipline, agreed upon by this preſent Aſſembly; and doe therefore think it meet, that this Confeſſion of Faith ſhould be commended to the Churches of Chriſt among ſt us, and to the Honoured Court, as worthy of their due conſideration and acceptance.* Howbeit, we may not conceal, that the doctrine of *Vocation* expreſſed in *Chap.* 10. *Sect.* 1. and ſummarily repeated in *Chap.* 13. *Sect.* 1. paſſed not without ſome debate. Yet conſidering that the term of *Vocation*, and others by which it is deſcribed, are capeable of a large, or more ſtrict ſenſe & uſe, and that it is not intended to bind apprehenſions preciſely in point of order or method, there hath

hath been a general Condeſcendency there-unto.

Now by this our profeſſed conſent and free concurrence with them in all the Doctrinals of Religion, we hope it may appear to the world, that as we are a remnant of the People of the ſame Nation with them; ſo we are profeſſors of the ſame common Faith, and fellow heirs of the ſame common ſalvation. Yea moreover, as this our Profeſſion of the ſame Faith with them, will exempt us (even in their judgements) from ſuſpition of Hereſie; ſo (we truſt) it may exempt us in the like ſort from ſuſpition of Schiſm: that though we are forced to diſſent from them in matters of Church Diſcipline, yet our diſſent is not taken up out of arrogancy of ſpirit in our ſelves (whom they ſee willingly condeſcend to learn of them) neither is it carried with uncharitable cenſoriouſneſs towards them, (both which are the proper and eſſential characters of Schiſm) but in meekneſs of wiſdome, as we walk along with them, and follow them as they follow Chriſt: ſo where we conceive a different apprehenſion of the mind of Chriſt (as it falleth out in ſome few points touching Church-Order) we ſtil reſerve due reverence to them (whom we judge to be, through Chriſt, the glorious Lights of both Nations) and only crave leave (as in the ſpirit we are bound) to follow the Lamb whitherſoever he goeth,

goeth, and (after the Apoſtles example) as we believe, ſo we ſpeak.

And if the example of ſuch poor Out-caſts as our ſelves might prevail, if not with all (for that were too great a bleſſing to hope for) yet with ſome or other of our Brethren in *England*, ſo far as they are come to mind and ſpeak the ſame thing with ſuch as diſſent from them, we hope in Chriſt it would not only moderate the harſh judging and condemning of one another in ſuch differences of judgement as may be found in the choiceſt Saints; but alſo prevent (by the mercy of Chriſt) the peril of the diſtracton and deſtruction of all the Churches in both Kingdomes. Otherwiſe, if Brethren ſhall goe on to bite and devour one another, the Apoſtle feared (as we alſo with ſadneſs of heart doe) it will tend to the conſuming of them, and us all: which the Lord prevent.

We are not ignorant, that (beſides theſe aſperſions of *Hereſy* and *Sebiſm*) other exceptions alſo are taken at our way of Church Government, but (as we conceive) upon as little grounds. As,

1. *That by admitting none into the fellowſhip of our Church but Saints by calling, we rob many Pariſh Churches of their beſt Members, to make up one of our Congregations, which is not only to gather Churches out of Churches (a thing unheard of in Scripture) but alſo to weaken the hearts and*

hands of the best Ministers in the Parishes, by despoiling them of their best Hearers.

2. *That we provide no course for the gaining, and calling in of ignorant, and erroneous, and scandalous persons, whom we refuse to receive into our Churches, and so exclude from the wholsome Remedy of Church Discipline.*

3. *That in our way, we sow seeds of division, and hindrance of edification in every family, whilst admitting into our Churches only Voluntaryes, the Husband will be of one Church, the Wife of another; the parents of one Church, the children of another, the Master of one Church, the Servants of another. And so the Parents and Masters being of different Churches from their Children and Servants, they cannot take a just account of their profiting by what they hear: yea, by this means the Husbands, Parents & Masters, shall be chargeable to the maintenance of many other Churches and Church Officers, besides their own: which will prove a charge and burthen unsupportable.*

But for Answer. As to the first: For gathering Churches out of Churches, we cannot say that it is a thing unheard of in Scripture. The first Christian Church was gathered out of the Jewish Church, and out of many Synagogues in that Church, and consisted partly of the Inhabitants of *Jerusalem*, partly of the *Galileans*: who though they kept some communion in some parts of publick Worship with the Temple, yet neither

neither did they frequent the Sacrifices, nor repair to the Sanhedrim for the determining of their Church-causes, but kept intire and constant communion with the Apostles Church in all the Ordinances of the Gospel. And for the first Christian Church of the Gentiles at *Antioch* it appeareth to have been gathered and constituted partly of the dispersed Brethren of the Church at Jerusalem (whereof some were men of Cyprus and Cyrene) and partly of the believing Gentiles, *Acts* 11.20,21.

If it be said, *The first christian Church at* Jerusalem, *and that at* Antioch, *were gathered not out of any christian Church, but out of the Jewish Temple and Synagogues, which were shortly after to be abolished: and their gathering to* Antioch, *was upon occasion of dispersion in time of Persecution.*

We desire it may be considered, 1 That the Members of the Jewish Church were more strongly and straitly tyed by express holy covenant, to keep fellowship with the Jewish Church till it was abolished, then any members of Christian Parish churches are wont to be tyed to keep fellowship with their Parish-churches. The Episcopal *Canons*, which bind them to attend on their Parish church, it is likely they are now abolished with the Episcopacy. The *common Law* of the land is satisfied (as we conceive) if they attend upon the Worship of God

God in any other Church, thô not within their own Pariſh. But no ſuch like covenant of God, nor any other Religious tye lyeth upon them to attend the Worſhip of God in their own Pariſh church, as did lye upon the Jews to attend upon the Worſhip of God in their Temple and Synagogues.

2. Though the Jewiſh Temple-church at *Jeruſalem* was to be aboliſhed, yet that doth not make the deſertion of it by the members to be lawful, till it was aboliſhed. Future abolition is no warrant for preſent deſertion, unleſs it be lawful in ſome caſe whilſt the Church is yet in preſent ſtanding to deſert it; to wit, either for avoiding preſent pollutions, or for hope of greater edification, and ſo for better ſatiſfaction to conſcience in either. Future events, or foreſight of them, doe not diſſolve preſent Relations, elſe wives, children, ſervants, might deſert their husbands, parents, Maſters, when they be mortally ſick.

3. What the Members of the Jewiſh Church did, in joyning to the Church at *Antioch* in time of Perſecution, it may well be conceived the Members of any chriſtian Church may doe the like for ſatiſfaction of conſcience. Peace of conſcience is more deſirable then the peace of the outward man; and freedome from ſcruples of conſcience is more comfortable to a ſincere heart, then freedome from Perſecution:

If it be ſaid, *Theſe Members of the Chriſtian Church at Jeruſalem that joyned to the Church at Antioch, removed their habitations together with their Relations: which if the Brethren of the Congregational way would do, it would much abate the grievance of their departure from their Preſbyterial Churches.*

We verily could wiſh them ſo to doe, as well approving the like removal of habitation, in caſe of changing Church-Relations (provided that it may be done without too much detriment to their outward eſtates) and we for our parts have done the ſame. But to put a neceſsity of removal of habitation in ſuch a caſe, it is to foment and cheriſh a corrupt Principle of making civil cohabitation, if not a *formal cauſe*, yet at leaſt a *proper adjunct* of Church-Relation, which the truth of the Goſpel doth not acknowledge. Now to foment an error to the prejudice of the truth of the Goſpel, is not to walk with a right foot according to the truth of the Goſpel. as *Paul* judgeth, *Gal.* 2. 14,

4. We doe not think it meet or ſafe, for a Member of a Presbyterial Church forthwith to deſert his Relation to his Church, betake himſelf to the fellowſhip of a Congregational Church, though he may diſcern ſome defect in the eſtate or government of his own. For,

1. Faithfulneſs of brotherly love in Church-Relation, requireth that the Members of the

Church ſhould firſt convince their Brethren of their ſinful defects, and duely wait for their reformation, before they depart from them. For if we muſt take ſuch a courſe for the healing of a private Brother, in a way of brotherly love, with much meekneſs and patience; how much more ought we ſo to walk with like tenderneſs toward an whole Church.

Again, 2. By the haſty departure of ſound Members from a defective Church, Reformation is not promoted, but many times retarded, and corruption increaſed. Whereas on the contrary, while ſincere Members breathing after purity of Reformation abide together, they may (by the bleſſing of God upon their faithful endeavours) prevail much with their Elders and Neighbours towards a Reformation, it may be, ſo much as that their Elders in their own Church ſhall receive none to the Seals but viſible Saints; & in the Claſſis ſhall put forth no authoritative act (but conſultative only) touching the Members of other Churches, not touching their own, but with the conſent (ſilent conſent at leaſt) of their own Church: Which two things, if they can obtain with any humble, meek, holy, faithful endeavours, we conceive they might (by the grace of Chriſt) find liberty of conſcience to continue their Relation with their own Presbyterial Church without ſcruple.

5. But to adde a word further, touching the

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gathering of Churches out of Churches: what if there were no expreſs example of ſuch a thing extant in the Scriptures? That which we are wont to anſwer the Antipædobaptiſts may ſuffice here; *It is enough if any evidence thereof may be gathered from juſt conſequence of Scripture light.* Doctor *Ames* his judgement concerning this caſe, paſſeth (for ought we know) without exception, which he gave in his fourth Book of Conſcience, in Anſw. to two Qu. *Chap.* 14. *Num.* 16, *If any* (ſaith he) *wronged with unjuſt vexation, or providing for his own edification, or in teſtimony againſt ſin, depart from a Church where ſome evils are tolerated, and joyn himſelf to another more pure, yet without condemning of the Church he leaveth, he is not therefore to be held as a Schiſmatick, or as guilty of any other ſin.*

Where the tripartite diſjunction which the judicious Doctor putteth, declareth the lawfulneſs of the departure of a Church Member from his Church, when either through wearineſs of unjuſt vexation, or in way of proviſion for his own edification, or in teſtimony againſt ſin, he joyneth himſelf to another Congregation more reformed. Any one of theſe, he judgeth a lawful cauſe of departure, though all of them doe not concur together. Neither will ſuch a practice deſpoil the beſt Miniſters of the Pariſhes of their beſt hearers. For,

1. Sometimes the Miniſters themſelves are willing

willing to joyn with their better ſort of hearers in this way of Reformation, and then they and their Hearers continue ſtil their Church Relation together, yea and confirm it more ſtraitly & ſtrongly, by an expreſs renewed Covenant, though the Miniſters may ſtil continue their wonted preaching to the whole Pariſh.

2. If the Miniſters doe diſlike the way of thoſe whom they otherwiſe count their beſt Members, and ſo refuſe to joyn with them therein; yet if thoſe Members can procure ſome other Miniſters to joyn with them in their own way, and ſtil continue their dwelling together in the ſame Town, they may eaſily order the times of the publick Aſſembly, as to attend conſtantly upon the Miniſtry of their former Church; and either after or before the publick Aſſembly of the Pariſh, take an opportunity to gather together for the Adminiſtration of the Sacraments, and cenſures, and other Church-ordinances amongſt themſelves. The firſt Apoſtolick Church aſſembled to hear the Word, with the Jewiſh Church in the open courts of the Temple; but afterwards gathered together for breaking of Bread, and other acts of Church-order, from houſe to houſe.

3. Suppoſe Presbyterial Churches ſhould communicate ſome of their beſt gifted Members towards the erecting and gathering of another Church, it would not forthwith be their

detriment

detriment, but may be their enlargement. It is the moſt noble and perfect work of a living creature (both in nature and grace) to propogate and multiply his kind: and it is the honour of the faithful Spouſe of Chriſt, to ſet forward the work of Chriſt as well abroad as at home. The Church in *Cant.* 8 8. to help forward her little Siſter-Church, was willing to part with her choice Materials even beams of cedar, and ſuch precious living ſtones as were fit to build a Silver Palace. In the ſame Book, the Church is ſometimes compared to a Garden, ſometimes to an Orchard, *Cant.* 4. 12. 13. No man planteth a garden or orchard, but ſeeketh to get the choiceſt Herbs and Plants of his neighbours, and they freely impart them: nor do they account it a ſpoil to their garden and orchard, but rather a glory. Nevertheleſs we goe not ſo far, we neither ſeek nor ask the choice Members of the Pariſhes, but accept them being offered.

If it be ſaid; They are not offered by the Miniſters, nor by the Pariſh Churches, (who have moſt right in them) but only by themſelves.

It may juſtly be demanded what right, or what power have either the Miniſters or Pariſh Church over them? Not by ſolemn Church-covenant, for that, though it be the firmeſt engagement, is not owned, but rejected. If it be by their joyning with the Pariſh in the calling and election of a Miniſter to ſuch a Congrega-

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tion at his first coming, there is indeed just weight in such an engagement: Nor doe we judge it safe for such to remove from such a Minister, unless it be upon such grounds as may justly give him due satisfaction. But if the union of such Members to a Parish church and to the Ministry thereof, be only by cohabitation within the precincts of the Parish, that union, as it was founded upon humane Law, so by humane Law it may easily be released. Or otherwise, if a man remove his Habitation, he removeth also the bond of his Relation, and the ground of offence.

4. It need not be feared, that all the best Hearers of the best Ministers, no nor the most of them, will depart from them upon point of Church government. Those who have found the presence and power of the Spirit of Christ breathing in their Ministers, either to their conversion or edification, will be slow to change such a Ministry of Faith and Holiness, for the liberty of Church Order. Upon which ground, and sundry other such like, there be doubtless sundry godly and judicious Hearers in many Parishes in *England*, that do & will prefer their relation to their Ministers (though in a Presbyterial way) above the congregational Confederation.

5. But if all, or the most part of the best Hearers of the best Ministers of Parishes should

depart

depart from them, as preferring in their Judgements the congregational Way; yet in caſe the congregational way ſhould prove to be of Chriſt it will never grieve the holy hearts of godly Miniſters, that their Hearers ſhould follow Chriſt: yea many of themſelves (upon due deliberation) will be ready to goe along with them. It never grieved nor troubled *John Baptiſt*, that his Diſciples departed from him to follow after Chriſt *Joh.* 3. but if the congregational way ſhould prove to be, not the Inſtitution of Chriſt (as we take it) but the Invention of men; then doubtleſs the Presbyterial Form (if it be of God) will ſwallow up the other, as Moſes Rod devoured the Rods of the Egyptians. Nor will this put a neceſſity upon both the oppoſite Partyes to ſhift for themſelves, and to ſeek to ſupplant one another, but only it will call upon them [*aletheuein en agape*] to ſeek and to follow the truth in love, to attend in faithfulneſs each unto his own Flock, and to adminiſter to them all the holy things of God, and their portion of food in due ſeaſon: and as for others, quietly to forbear them, and yet to inſtruct them with meekneſs that are contrary minded, leaving it to Chriſt (in the uſe of all good means) to reveal his own truth in his own time, and meanwhile endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, *Phil.* 3. 15, 16. *Eph.* 4. 3.

To

To the second Exception, That we take no course for the gaining, and healing, and calling in of ignorant and erroneous persons, whom we refuse to receive into our Churches, and so exclude them from the Remedy of Church-Discipline.

We conceive the receiving of them into our Churches would rather lose and corrupt our Churches, then gain and heal them. A little Leaven laid in a lump of dough, will sooner leaven the whole lump, then the whole lump will sweeten it. We find it therefore safer to square rough and unhewen stones before they be laid into the building, rather then to hammer and hew them when they lye unevenly in the building. And accordingly, two means we use to gain and call in such as are ignorant and scandalous.

1. *The publick Ministry of the Word*, upon which they are invited by counsel, & required by wholsome Laws. And the Word it is, which is the power of God to salvation, to the calling and winning of Souls.

2. *Private Conference*, and conviction by the Elders, and other able Brethren of the Church: whom they do the more respectively hearken unto, when they see no hope of enjoying Church fellowship, or participation in the Sacraments for themselves or their children, till they approve their judgements to be sound and orthodox, and their lives subdued to some hope of a godly conversation. What can clas-

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ſical Diſcipline, or excommunication it ſelf do more in this caſe?

The third exception wrappeth up in it a three-fold domeſtical inconvenience, and each of them meet to be eſchewed, 1. *Diſunion in Familyes between each Relation.* 2. *Diſappointment of Edification, for want of opportunity in the Governours of Familyes to take account of things heard by their children and ſervants.* 3. *Diſburſements of chargeable maintenance to the ſeveral Churches, whereto the ſeveral perſons of their familyes are joyned.*

All which inconveniencies either doe not fall out in congregational Churches, or are eaſily redreſſed. For, none are orderly admitted into congregational Churches, but ſuch as are well approved by good teſtimony to be duely obſervant of Family-relation: or if any otherwiſe diſpoſed ſhould creep in, they are either orderly healed, or duely removed in a way of Chriſt. Nor are they admitted, unleſs they can give ſome good account of their profiting by Ordinances, before the Elders and Brethren of the Church, and much more to their Parents and Maſters. Godly Tutors in the Univerſity can take an account of their Pupils; and godly Houſholders in the city can take an account of their children and ſervants, how they profit by the word they have heard in ſeveral Churches, and that to the greater edification of the whole

Family

Family, by the variety of such administrations? Bees may bring more Honey and Wax into the Hive, when they are not limited to one Garden of Flowers, but may fly abroad to many.

Nor is any charge expected from Wives, Children or Servants to the maintenance of congregational Churches further then they be furnished with personal Estates or Livings, which may enable them to contribute of such things as they have, and not of such things as they have not. God accepteth not Robbery for a Sacrifice. And though a godly Housholder may justly take himself bound in conscience to contribute to any such Church, whereto his wife or children or servants do stand in relation, yet that will not aggravate the burthen of his charge, no more then if they were received Members of the same Church whereto himself is related.

But why doe stand thus long to plead exemptions from exceptions? The Lord help all his faithful Servants (whether Presbyterial or Congregational) to judge and shame our selves before the Lord, for all our former compliances to greater Enormityes in Church Government, then are to be found either in the Congregational or Presbyterial Way: & then surely either the Lord will clear up his own will to us, and so frame and subdue us all to one mind and one way

way, (*Ezek.*43.10,11.) or elſe we ſhall learn to bear one anothers burthens in a ſpirit of meekneſs. It will then doubtleſs be far from us, ſo to atteſt the Diſcipline of Chriſt, as to deteſt the Diſciples of Chriſt: ſo to contend for the *ſeamleſs Coat* of Chriſt, as to crucifie the living Members of Chriſt, ſo to divide our ſelves about Church-communion, as through breaches to open a wide gap for a deluge of Antichriſtian, & profane malignity to ſwallow up both Church and civil State.

What ſhall we ſay more? Is difference of Church Order, become the inlet of all the diſorders in the Kingdome? Hath the Lord indeed left us to ſuch hardneſs of heart, that Church-Government ſhall become a ſnare to *Zion* (as ſometimes Moſes was to Egypt, *Exod* 10.7.) that we cannot leave conteſting and contending about it, till the Kingdome be deſtroyed? Did not the Lord Jeſus, when he dedicated his ſufferings for his Church, and his alſo unto his Father, make it his earneſt and only Prayer for us in this World, that we all might be one in him? *Joh.*17.20,21,22,23 And is it poſſible that he (whom the Father heard alwayes, *Joh.* 11.42.) ſhould not have this laſt moſt ſolemn Prayer heard and granted? Or ſhall it be granted for all the Saints elſewhere, and not for the Saints in *England*; ſo that amongſt them diſunion ſhall grow even about Church Union

and

and Communion? If it be possible for a little Faith (so much as a grain of Mustardseed) to remove a mountain, is it not possible for so much strength of Faith as is to be found in all the godly in the Kingdome, to remove those Images of Jealousie, and to cast those stumbling-blocks out of the way, which may hinder the free passage of brotherly love among Brethren? It is true indeed, the national Covenant doth justly engage both Partyes faithfully to endeavour the utter extirpation of the Antichristian Hierarchy, and much more of all Blasphemyes, Heresyes and Errors. Certainly if Congregational Discipline be independent from the Inventions of men, is it not much more independen from the delusions of Satan? What fellowship hath Christ with Belial? Light with darkness? Truth with error? The faithful *Jews* needed not the help of the *Samaritans* to re-edifie the Temple of God; yea they rejected their help when it was offered, *Ezra* 4. 1,2,3. And if the Congregational way be a way of truth (as we believe) and if the Brethren that walk in it be zealous of the truth, and hate every false way (as by the rule of their holy Discipline they are instructed, 2 *Joh.* 10. 11.) then verily there is no branch in the National Covenant, that engageth the Covenanters to abhor either the Congregational Churches, or their Way: which being duely administred

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do no leſs effectually extirpate the Antichriſtian Hierarchy, and all Blaſphemyes, Hereſyes, and pernicious Errours, then the other way of Diſcipline doth, which is more generally and publickly received and ratified.

But the Lord Jeſus commune with all our hearts in ſecret: and he who is the King of his Church, let him be pleaſed to exerciſe his Kingly Power in our ſpirits, that ſo his Kingdome may come into our Churches in Purity and Peace. *Amen. Amen.*

CHAP. I.

Of the Form of Church-Government; and that it is one, immutable, and prescribed in the Word.

ECclesiastical Polity, or Church-Government or Discipline, is nothing else but that Form and Order that is to be observed in the Church of Christ upon earth, both for the constitution of it, and all the Administrations that therein are to be performed. *Ezek.* 43.11. *Col.* 2.5. 1 *Tim.* 3.15.

2. Church-Government is considered in a double respect, either in regard of the parts of Government themselves, or necessary circumstances thereof. The parts of Government are prescribed in the Word, because the Lord Jesus Christ, the King and Law-giver of his Church, is no less faithful in the house of God then was *Moses*, who from the Lord delivered a Form and pattern of Government to the children of Israel in the Old Testament: and the holy Scriptures are now also so perfect, as they are able to make the man of God perfect, and throughly *Heb.* 3.5,6. *Exod.* 25.40. 2 *Tim.* 3.16.

furniſhed unto every good work; and therefore doubtleſs to the well ordering of the Houſe of God.

3. The parts of Church-Government, are all of them exactly deſcribed in the Word of God, being parts or means of inſtituted Worſhip according to the ſecond Commandment, & therefore to continue one and the ſame unto the appearing of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt as a Kingdome that cannot be ſhaken, until he ſhall deliver it up unto God even to the Father. So that it is not left in the power of men, Officers, Churches, or any ſtate in the world to adde, or diminiſh, or alter any thing in the leaſt meaſure therein.

1 *Tim.*3.15.
1 *Chron.*15.13
*Exod.*20.4.
1 *Tim.*6.13,16
*Heb.*12.27,28
1 *Cor.*15. 24.
*Deut.*12,32.
*Ezek.*43 8.
1 *Kings* 12.31 32,33.

4. The neceſſary circumſtances, as time and place, *&c.* belonging unto Order and decency, are not ſo left unto men, as that under pretence of them they may thruſt their own Inventions upon the Churches, being circumſcribed in the Word with many general limitations, where they are determined in reſpect of the matter, to be neither Worſhip it ſelf, nor Circumſtances ſeparable from Worſhip. In reſpect of their End, they muſt be done unto edification; In reſpect of the Manner

2 *Kings* 12.
*Exod.*20.19.
*Iſa.*28.13.
*Col.*1.22,23.
*Act.*15.28.
*Mat.*15 9.
1 *Cor.* 11.23. & 8.34.
1 *Cor.*14.26.

Manner, decently and in order, according to the nature of the things themselves, and civil and Church cuſtome. Doth not even nature it ſelf teach you? yea, they are in ſome ſort determined particularly, namely, that they be done in ſuch a manner, as all circumſtances conſidered, is moſt expedient for edification: ſo, as if there be no error of man concerning their determination, the determining of them is to be accounted as if it were divine.

1 *Cor* 14.26. & 14.40. & 11.14,16. & 14.12, 19. *Acts* 15.28.

CHAP. II.

Of the Nature of the Catholick Church in general, and in ſpecial of a particular Viſible Church.

THe Catholick Church is the whole company of thoſe that are elected, redeemed, & in time effectually called from the ſtate of ſin and death, unto a ſtate of grace and ſalvation in Jeſus Chriſt.

Eph. 1.22, 23. & 5.25,26,30. *Heb.* 12.23.

2. This Church is either Triumphant, or Militant. Triumphant, the number of them who are glorified in in Heaven: Militant, the number of

Rom. 8.17. 2*Tim.* 2.12. & 4.8. *Eph.* 6. 12, 13.

of them who are conflicting with their enemies upon earth.

2 Tim. 2. 19. Rev. 2. 17. 1 Cor. 6. 17. Eph. 3. 17. Rom. 1. 8. 1 Thess. 1. 8. Isa. 2. 2. 1 Tim. 6. 12

3. This militant Church is to be considered as Invisible, and Visible. Invisible, in respect of their relation wherein they stand to Christ, as a Body unto the Head, being united unto him by the Spirit of God, and faith in their hearts. Visible, in respect of the profession of their Faith, in their persons, and in particular Churches. And so there may be acknowledged an Universal Visible Church.

Act. 19. 1. Col. 2. 5. Mat. 18. 17. 1 Cor. 5. 12.

4. The Members of the Militant Visible Church, considered either as not yet in Church-order, or walking according to the Church-order of the Gospel. In Order, and so besides the spiritual union and communion common to all Believers, they enjoy moreover an union and communion Ecclesiastical-Political. So we deny an Universal Visible Church.

Gen. 18. 19. Exod. 19. 6

5. The state of the Members of the Militant Visible Church walking in order, was either before the Law, Oeconomical, that is in Familyes; or under the Law, National; or since the coming of Christ, only Congregational. (The term *Independent* we approve

prove not) Therefore neither National, Provincial, nor Classical.

6. A Congregational Church is by the Institution of Christ a part of the Militant Visible Church, consisting of a company of Saints by calling, united into one Body by an holy covenant, for the publick Worship of God, and the mutual edification one of another, in the fellowship of the Lord Jesus.

1 Cor 14.23, 36. & 1.2. *and* 12.27. *Exod.* 19.5,6. *Deut.* 29.1. & 9 *to* 15. *Acts* 2.42. 1 *Cor.* 14.26.

CHAP. III.

Of the matter of the Visible Church, both in respect of Quality and Quantity.

THe Matter of a Visible Church are Saints by calling.

1 *Cor.* 1.2. *Ephes.* 1.1.

2. By Saints, we understand, 1. Such as have not only attained the knowledge of the Principles of Religion, & are free from gross and open scandals, but also doe together with the profession of their Faith and Repentance, walk in blameless obedience to the Word, so as that in charitable discretion they may be accounted Saints by calling (though perhaps some or more of them be unsound, and Hypocrites

Heb. 6.1. 1 *Cor.* 1.5. *Rom.* 15.14. *Psal.* 50.16,17 *Acts* 8.37. *Mat.* 3.6. *Rom.* 6.17. 1 *Cor.* 1.2. *Phil.* 1.2. *Col.* 1.2. *Ephes.* 1.1.

inwardly) because the Members of such particular Churches are commonly by the holy Ghost called *Saints & faithful Brethren in Christ:* and sundry Churches have been reproved for receiving and suffering such persons to continue in fellowship amongst them, as have been offensive and scandalous; the Name of God also by this means is blasphemed, and the holy things of God defiled and profaned, the hearts of the godly grieved, and the wicked themselves hardened, and holpen forward to damnation. The example of such doth endanger the sanctity of others: A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump 2. The Children of such, who are also holy.

1 *Cor.*5.2, 13. *Rev.* 2.14, 15, 20. *Ezek.*44.7 9. &23.38.39 *Numb.* 19.20. *Hag.*2.13, 14. 1*Cor.*11.27. 29. *Psa.*37.21. 1 Cor.5.6. 2 Cor.7.14.

3. The Members of Churches, though orderly constituted, may in time degenerate, and grow corrupt & scandalous, which though they ought not to be tolerated in the Church, yet their continuance therein, through the defect of the execution of Discipline & just censures, doth not immediately dissolve the Being of a Church, as appears in the Church of *Israel*, and the Churches of *Galatia* and *Corinth*, *Pergamus* and *Thyatira*.

*Jer.*2.21 1 *Cor.*5.12. *Jer.*2.4. *Gal.*5.4. 2 *Cor.*12.21. *Rev.*2.14, 15. & 21.21.

4. The matter of the Church in reſpect of its *Quantity*, ought not to be of greater number then may ordinarily meet together conveniently in one place; nor ordinarily fewer, then may conveniently carry on Church-work. Hence when the holy Scripture makes mention of the Saints combined into a Church eſtate, in a town or city where was but one Congregation, it uſually calleth thoſe Saints [*The Church*] in the ſingular number; as, *The Church of the Theſſalonians*, *The Church of Smyrna*, *Philadelphia*, & the like: But when it ſpeaketh of the Saints in a nation or Province, wherein there were ſundry Congregations, it frequently and uſually calleth them by the name of [*Churches*] in the plural number, as the *Churches* of *Aſia*, *Galatia*, *Macedonia*, and the like: which is further confirmed by what is written of ſundry of thoſe Churches in particular, how they were aſſembled and met together the whole Church in one place, as the Church at *Jeruſalem*, the Church at *Antioch*, the Church at *Corinth*, and *Cenchrea*, though it were more near to *Corinth*, it being the Port thereof, and anſwerable to a Village

1 *Cor.* 14. 23. *Mat.* 18. 17.

Rom. 16. 1. 1 *Theſ.* 1. 1. *Rev.* 2. 8. & 3. 7

1 *Cor.* 16. 1, 19 *Gal.* 1. 2. 2 *Cor.* 8. 1. 1 *Theſſ.* 2. 14.

Acts. 2. 46. & 5. 12 & 6. 2 & 14. 27. & 15. 38. 1 *Cor.* 5. 4. & 14. 23. *Rom.* 16. 1.

lage, yet being a distinct Congregation from *Corinth*, it had a Church of its own as well as *Corinth* had.

5. Nor can it with reason be thought but that every Church appointed and ordained by Christ, had a Ministry ordained and appointed for the same; and yet plain it is, that there were no ordinary Officers appointed by Christ for any other then Congregational Churches; Elders being appointed to feed, not all flocks, but the particular flock of God over which the holy Ghost had made them Overseers, and that flock they must attend, even the whole flock: and one Congregation being as much as any ordinary Elders can attend, therefore there is no greater Church then a Congregation, which may ordinarily meet in one place.

Acts 20.28

CHAP. IV.

Of the Form of a visible Church, and of Church-Covenant,

SAints by calling must have a Visible Political Union amongst themselves or else they are not yet a particular Church; as those Similitudes hold forth which

1 *Cor.* 12.27
1 *Tim.* 3.15.

which the Scripture makes use of to shew the nature of particular Churches: as a *Body*, a *Building*, *House*, *Hands*, *Eyes*, *Feet*, and other Members must be united, or else (remaining separate) are not a Body. Stones, Timber, though squared, hewn and polished, are not an House, until they are compacted and united: so Saints or Believers, in judgement of charity are not a Church, unless orderly knit together. *Eph.* 2. 22. 1 *Cor.* 12. 15, 16, 17. *Rev.* 1

2. Particular Churches cannot be distinguished one from another, but by their Forms. *Ephesus* is not *Smyrna*, nor *Pergamus Thyatira*, but each one a distinct Society of it self, having Officers, of their own, which had not the charge of others: Virtues of their own, for which others are not praised: Corruptions of their own, for which others are not blamed.

3. This Form is the *Visible Covenant*, Agreement or Consent, whereby they give up themselves unto the Lord, to the observing of the Ordinances of Christ together in the same Society, which is usually called the *Church-Covenant*: For we see not otherwise how Members can have Church-power one over *Exod.* 19. 5, 8. *Deu.* 29. 12, 13 *Zech.* 11. 14. & 9. 11.

*Eph.*2.19. 2 *Cor.*11.2. over another mutually. The comparing of each particular Church to a *City*, and unto a *Spouse*, seemeth to conclude not only a Form but that that Form is by way of Covenant. The Covenant, as it was that which made the Family of *Abraham* and children of *Israel* to be a Church and People unto God, so is it that which now makes the several Societyes of Gentile Believers to be Churches in these dayes.

*Gen.*17.7 *Deu.*29.12,13 *Eph.*2.12, 18.

4. This voluntary agreement, consent or covenant (for all these are here taken for the same) although the more expres and plain it is, the more fully it puts us in mind of our mutual duty; & stirreth us up to it, & leaveth less room for the questioning of the truth of the Church-estate of a company of Professors, and the truth of Membership of particular persons; yet we conceive the substance of it is kept, where there is a real agreement and consent of a company of faithful persons to meet constantly together in one Congregation, for the publick Worship of God, & their mutual edification: which real Agreement & consent they do expres by their constant practice in coming together for the publick Worship of God

God, and by their religious ſubiection to the Ordinances of God there: the rather, if we doe conſider how Scripture covenants have been entred into, not only expreſly by word of mouth, but by Sacrifice, by Hand-writing, & Seal: and alſo ſometimes by ſilent conſent, without any writing, or expreſſion of words at all.

*Exod.*19.5. & 20.8. &24. 3, 17. *Joſh.*24.18 *to* 24. *Pſ.*50.5. *Neh.*9.38 & 10.1. *Gen.*17. *Deut.*29.

5. This Form being by mutual Covenant, it followeth, it is not faith in the heart, nor the profeſſion of that faith, nor cohabitation, nor Baptiſm. 1. Not *Faith in the heart*, becauſe that is inviſible. 2. Not *a bare profeſſion*; becauſe that declareth them no more to be Members of one Church then another: 3. Not *cohabitation*; Atheiſts or Infidels may dwell together with Believers: 4. Not *Baptiſm*; becauſe it preſuppoſeth a Church-eſtate, as circumciſion in the Old Teſtament, which gave no Being to the Church, the Church being before it, and in the Wilderneſs without it. Seals preſuppoſe a covenant already in being. One Perſon is a compleat ſubject of Baptiſm, but one perſon is uncapable of being a Church.

6. All Believers ought, as God giveth

eth them opportunity thereunto, to endeavour to joyn themselves unto a particular Church, & that in respect of the honour of Jesus Christ, in his Example and Institution, by the professed acknowledgement of, and subjection unto the Order and Ordinances of the Gospel: as also in respect of their good of communion founded upon their visible union, and contained in the Promises of Christs special presence in the Church; whence they have fellowship with him, and in him one with another: also for the keeping of them in the way of Gods commandments, and recovering of them in case of wandering, (which all Christs sheep are subject to in this life) being unable to return of themselves: together with the benefit of their mutual edification, and of their posterity, that they may not be cut off from the Priviledges of the Covenant. Otherwise, if a Believer offends, he remains destitute of the remedy provided in that behalf. And should all Believers neglect this duty of joyning to all particular Congregations, it might follow thereupon, that Christ should have no visible, Political Churches upon earth.

Acts 2.47.& 9. 26. *Mat.* 3. 13, 14, 15. & 28. 19, 20. *Psal.* 133.2,3. & 87.7. *Mat.* 18.20. 1 *Joh.* 1,3.

Psal. 119. 176. 1 *Pet.* 2. 25. *Eph* 4.16. *Joh.* 22.24, 25 *Mat.* 18.15,16 17.

CHAP.

CHAP. V.

Of the first subject of Church-Power; or, To whom Church-Power doth first belong.

THe first Subject of Church Power, is either Supreme, or Subordinate and Ministerial. The Supreme (by way of gift from the Father) is the Lord Jesus Christ: The Ministerial is either extraordinary, as the Apostles. Prophets and Evangelists; or ordinary, as every particular Congregational Church.

Mat. 18. 18. *Rev.* 3. 7. *Isa.* 9. 6. *Joh.* 20. 21, 23. 1 *Cor.* 14. 32. *Titus* 1. 5. 1 *Cor.* 5. 12.

2. Ordinary Church-Power, is either the Power of Office, that is, such as is proper to the Eldership: or Power of Priviledge, such as belongs to the Brotherhood. The latter, is in the Brethren formally, and immediately from Christ, that is, so as it may be acted or exercised immediately by themselves: the former is not in them formally or immediately, & therefore cannot be acted or exercised immediately by them, but is said to be in them, in that they design the Persons unto Office, who only are to act or to exercise this Power.

Rom. 12. 4, 8. *Act.* 1. 23. & 6. 3, 4. & 14. 23. 1 *Cor.* 10. 29, 30.

CHAP. VI,

CHAP. VI.

Of the Officers of the Church, and especially of Pastors and Teachers.

A Church being a company of people combined together by Covenant for the Worship of God, it appeareth thereby, that there may be the Essence and Being of a Church without any Officers, seeing there is both the Form and Matter of a Church; which is implyed when it is said, *The Apostles ordained Elders in every Church.*

Act. 14.23.

2. Nevertheless, though Officers be not absolutely necessary to the simple Being of Churches, when they be called; yet ordinarily to their Calling they are, and to their well being: and therefore the Lord Jesus out of his tender compassion, hath appointed and ordained Officers, which he would not have done, if they had not been useful and needful for the Church; yea, being ascended into Heaven, he received gifts for men, and gave gifts to men, whereof Officers for the Church are justly accounted no small parts, they being

Rom. 10.17.
Ier. 3.15.
1 *Cor.* 12.28.
Eph. 4.11.
Psal. 68.18.
Eph. 4.8, 11.

Eph. 4.12. 13.

to

to continue to the end of the world, & for the perfecting of all the Saints.

3. These Officers were either extraordinary or ordinary: Extraordinary, as Apostles, Prophets, Evangelists; Ordinary, as Elders & Deacons. The Apostles, Prophets and Evangelists, as they were called extraordinarily by Christ, so their Office ended with themselves. Whence it is that *Paul* directing *Timothy* how to carry along Church-Administrations, giveth no direction about the choice or course of Apostles, Prophets or Evangelists, but only of Elders & Deacons. & when *Paul* was to take his last leave of the Church of *Ephesus*, he committed the care of feeding the Church to no other, but unto the Elders of that Church. The like charge doth *Peter* commit to the Elders

1 *Cor.* 12.28
Eph. 4 11
Act. 8.6, 16, 19 & 11.28.
Rom. 11.13.
1 *Cor.* 4.9.
1 *Tim.* 3.1,2,8, to 13.
Titus 1.5
Acts 20.17,28
1 *Pet.* 5.1,2,3.

4. Of Elders (who are also in Scripture called *Bishops*) some attend chiefly to the Ministry of the Word, as the Pastors and Teachers; others attend especially unto Rule; who are therefore called *Ruling Elders*.

1 *Tim.* 2,3.
Phil. 1.1
Acts 20.17,28
1 *Tim.* 5.17.

5. The Office of Pastor and Teacher, appears to be destinct. The Pastors special work is, to attend to *Exhortation*, and therein to administer a word

Eph 4.11
Rom. 12.7,8
1 *Cor.* 12.8.

of *Wisdome*: The Teacher is to attend to *Doctrine*, and therein to administer a word of *Knowledge*: and either of them to administer the Seals of that Covenant, unto the dispensation whereof they are alike called; as also to execute the Censures, being but a kinde of application of the Word: the Preaching of which, together with the application thereof they are alike charged withall.

2 *Tim.*4.1,2 *Titus.*1.9.

6. And forasmuch as both Pastors and Teachers are given by Christ for the perfecting of the Saints, and edifying of his Body, which Saints & Body of Christ is his Church: and therefore we account Pastors and Teachers to be both of them Church-Officers, and not the Pastor for the Church, and the Teacher only for the Schools: though this we gladly acknowledge, that Schools are both lawful, profitable and necessary for the training up of such in good Literature or Learning, as may afterwards be called forth unto Office of Pastor or Teacher in the Church.

Eph 4.11,12. & 1.22,23.

1 *Sam.*10.12 19.20. 2 *Kin.*2.3,15.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII.

Of Ruling Elders and Deacons.

THe Ruling Elders Office is distinct from the Office of Pastor and Teacher. The Ruling Elders are not so called, to exclude the Pastors and Teachers from Ruling, because Ruling and Governing is common to these with the other, whereas attending to Teach and Preach the Word is peculiar unto the former. *Rom.* 12. 7,8,9. 1 *Tim.*5.17 1 *Cor*,12 28. *Heb* 13.17. 1 *Tim.*5.17

2. The Ruling Elders work is to joyn with the Pastor and Teacher in those acts of Spiritual Rule which are distinct from the Ministry of the Word and Sacraments committed to them. Of which sort these be as followeth: 1. To open and shut the doors of Gods House, by the Admission of Members approved by the Church; by Ordination of Officers chosen by the Church, and by Excommunication of notorious and obstinate Offenders renounced by the Church, and by restoring of Penitents forgiven by the Church. 2. To call the Church together when there is occasion, and seasonably to dismiss them again. 3. To prepare 1 *Tim.*5.17. 2 *Chro.*23.19. *Rev.*21.12 1 *Tim.*4.14 *Mat.*18.17 2 *Cor.*2.7,8. *Act.*2.6. *Act* 21.18, 22, 23.

pare matters in private, that in publick they may be carried an end with leſs trouble, and more ſpeedy diſpatch. 4. To moderate the carriage of all matters in the Church aſſembled; as, to propound matters to the Church, to order the ſeaſon of ſpeech and ſilence, and to pronounce ſentence according to the mind of Chriſt, with the conſent of the Church. 5. To be Guides and Leaders to the Church, in all matters whatſoever pertaining to Church-Adminiſtrations and Actions. 6. To ſee that none in the Church live inordinately, out of rank and place, without a calling. or idlely in their calling. 7. To prevent and heal ſuch offences in life or in doctrine. as might corrupt the Church. 8 To feed the flock of God with a Word of Admonition. 9. And as they ſhall be ſent for, to viſit and pray over their ſick Brethren: 10. And at other times as opportunity ſhall ſerve thereunto.

Acts 6.2,3. & 13.15.
2 *Cor*.8.19
Heb 13.7,17
2 *Theſ*.2.10, 11,12.
Acts 20.28, 32
1 *Theſ*.5.12
Jam.5.14
Acts 20 20

3. The Office of a Deacon is inſtituted in the Church by the Lord Jeſus: ſometime they are called *Helps*. The Scripture telleth us how they ſhould be qualified, *Grave, not double tongued, not given to much wine, not given to filthy lucre.*

Acts 6.3.6.
Phil.1.1.
1 *Tim*.3.8.
1 *Cor* 12.28.
1 *Tim*.3.8,9.

lucre. They must first be proved, and then use the office of a Deacon, being found blameless. The office and work of the Deacon. is to receive the the offerings of the Church. gifts given to the Church, and to keep the Treasury of the Church, and therewith to serve the Tables which the Church is to provide for; as the Lords Table, the Table of the Ministers, and of such as are in necessity, to whom they are to distribute in simplicity. *Act.* 4. 35 & 6 2,3. *Rom.* 12. 8.

4. The office therefore being limited unto the care of the temporal good things of the Church, it extends not to the attendance upon, and administration of the Spiritual things thereof, as the Word and Sacraments, or the like. 1 *Cor.* 7. 17

5. The ordinance of the Apostle, & practice of the Church, commends the Lords day as a fit time for the Contributions of the Saints. 1 *Cor.* 16. 1,2,3

6 The instituting of all these Officers in the Church, is the work of God himself, of the Lord Jesus Christ. of the holy Ghost: and therefore such Officers as he hath not appointed, are altogether unlawful either to be placed in the Church, or to be retained therein, and are to be looked at as humane 1 *Cor.* 12. 28. *Eph.* 4. 8, 11. *Act.* 20 28.

creatures, meer Inventions and Appointments of man, to the great dishonour of Christ Jesus, the Lord of his House, the King of his Church, whether *Popes*, *Patriarks*, *Cardinals*, *Archbishops*, *Lord Bishops*, *Archdeacons Officials*, *Commissaryes*, and the like. These and the rest of that Hierarchy and Retinue, not being Plants of the Lords planting, shall all be certainly rooted out and cast forth.

Mat. 15.13

7. The Lord hath appointed ancient Widows (where they may be had) to minister in the Church, in giving attendance to the sick, and to give succor unto them, and others in the like necessityes.

1 Tim. 5.9,10.

CHAP. VIII.

Of the Election of Church-Officers.

Heb. 5.4.

NO man may take the honour of a Church Officer unto himself, but he that was *called* of God, as was *Aaron*.

Gal. 1.1. *Act.* 14.23. & 6.3.

2. *Calling* unto Office is either *immediate*, by Christ himself such was the Call of the Apostles and Prophets, this manner of calling ended with them as hath been said: or *mediate*, by the Church.

3. It

3. It is meet, that before any be Ordained or choſen Officers, they ſhould firſt be tryed and proved, becauſe hands are not ſuddenly to be laid upon any, and both Elders and Deacons muſt be of honeſt & good report. 1 *Tim.*5.22 & 7.10. *Act.*16.2. & 6.3.

4. The things in reſpect of which they are to be tried, are thoſe gifts and virtues which the Scripture requireth in men that are to be elected into ſuch places, *viz.* that Elders muſt be *blameleſs*, *Sober*, *apt to teach*, and endued with ſuch other qualifications as are laid down 1 *Tim.*3.2. *Titus* 1 6, *to* 9. Deacons to be fitted as is directed, *Act.*6.3. 1 *Tim.*3.8, *to* 11.

5. Officers are to be called by ſuch Churches whereunto they are to miniſter. Of ſuch moment is the preſervation of this Power, that the Churches exerciſed it in the preſence of the Apoſtles. *Acts* 14.23. & 1.23. & 6.3, 4,5.

6. A Church being free, cannot become ſubject to any, but by a free election; yet when ſuch a people doe chuſe any to be over them in the Lord, then doe they become ſubject, and moſt willingly ſubmit to their Miniſtry in the Lord, whom they have ſo choſen. *Gal.*5.13 *Heb.*13.17.

7. And if the Church have power to chuſe their Officers and Miniſters, then in caſe of manifeſt unworthineſs and delinquency, they have power alſo to depoſe them: for, to open and ſhut, to chuſe and refuſe, to conſtitute in office, and remove from Office, are acts belonging to the ſame power.

*Rom.*16.17.

8. We judge it much conducing to the well-being and communion of Churches, that where it may conveniently be done, Neighbour Churches be adviſed withall, and their help be made uſe of in the trial of Church-officers in order to their choice.

*Cant.*8.8,9.

9. The choice of ſuch Church-officers belongeth not to the Civil Magiſtrates as ſuch, or Dioceſan Biſhops, or Patrons: for of theſe, or any ſuch like, the Scripture is wholly ſilent, as having any power therein.

CHAP. IX.

Of Ordination, and Impoſition Of Hands.

CHurch Officers are not only to be choſen by the Church, but alſo to be ordained by Impoſition of hands & prayer

Acts 13.3 & 14.23. 1 *Tim.*5.22

prayer, with which at the Ordination of Elders, Faſting alſo is to be joyned.

2. This *Ordination* we account nothing elſe, but the ſolemn putting a man into his place and office in the Church, whereunto he had right before by Election: being like the inſtalling of a Magiſtrate in the Common wealth. Ordination therefore is not to goe before but to follow Election. The eſſence and ſubſtance of the outward calling of an ordinary officer in the Church, doth not conſiſt in his Ordination, but in his voluntary and free Election by the Church, and his accepting of that Election: whereupon is founded that Relation between Paſtor and Flock, between ſuch a Miniſter & ſuch a People. Ordination doth not conſtitute an officer, nor give him the eſſentials of his office. The Apoſtles were Elders without Impoſition of hands by men: *Paul* and *Barnabas* were officers before that Impoſition of hands, *Acts* 13.3. The Poſterity of *Levi* were Prieſts and Levites, before hands were laid on them by the children of *Iſrael*.

Numb. 8.10 *Acts* 6.5,6. & 13.2,3.

Act. 6.5,6. & 14.23.

3. In ſuch Churches where there are Elders, Impoſition of hands in ordination

1 *Tim* 4.14. *Act.* 13.3 1 *Tim.* 5.22

dination is to be performed by thoſe Elders.

*Numb.*8.10. 4. In ſuch Churches where there are no Elders, Impoſition of Hands may be performed by ſome of the Brethren orderly choſen by the Church thereunto. For if the people may elect officers, which is the greater, and wherein the ſubſtance of the office doth conſiſt, they may much more (occaſion and need ſo requiring) impoſe hands in ordination, which is leſs, and but the accompliſhment of the other.

5. Nevertheleſs, in ſuch Churches where there are no Elders, and the Church ſo deſire, we ſee not why Impoſition of hands may not be performed by the *Elders of other Churches.* Ordinary Officers laid hands upon the Officers of many Churches: The Presbytery at *Epheſus* laid hands upon *Timothy* an Evangeliſt; the Presbytery at *Antioch* laid hands upon *Paul* and *Barnabas.*

1 *Tim.*4.14. *Acts* 13.3.

6. Church-officers are officers to one Church, even that particular over which the holy Ghoſt hath made them overſeers. Inſomuch as Elders are commanded to feed, not all flocks, but that flock which is committed to their

1 *Pet.*5.2 *Acts* 20.28.

faith

faith and truſt, and dependeth upon them. Nor can conſtant reſidence at one Congregation be neceſſary for a Miniſter no nor yet lawful. if he be not a Miniſter to one Congregation only but to the Church univerſal; be- *Acts* 20.28. cauſe he may not attend one part only of the Church to which he is a Miniſter, but he is called to attend unto all the flock.

7. He that is clearly looſed from his Office-relation unto that Church whereof he was a Miniſter, cannot be looked at as an officer, nor perform any act of office in any other Church, unleſs he be again orderly called unto Office: which when it ſhall be, we know nothing to hinder, but Impoſition of hands alſo in his Ordination ought to be uſed towards him again. For ſo *Paul* the Apoſtle received Impoſition of hands twice at leaſt from *Ananias*, *Acts* 9. 17. & 13.3.

CHAP. X.

Of the Power of the Church, and its Presbytery.

SUpreme and Lordly Power over all the Churches upon earth doth only belong

*Psal.*2.6. *Eph.*1. 21,22. *Isa.*9.6. *Mat.*28.18

belong unto Jesus Christ, who is King of the Church, and the Head thereof. He hath the Government upon his shoulders, and hath all power given to him both in Heaven and Earth.

2. A Company of professed Believers Ecclesiastically confederate, as they are a Church before they have Officers, and without them; so even in that estate, subordinate Church-power under Christ, delegated to them by him, doth belong to them in such a manner as is before expressed, *Chap.*5. *Sect.*2. and as flowing from the very Nature and essence of a Church: It being natural to all Bodies, and so unto a Church Body, to be furnished with sufficient power for its own preservation and subsistence.

Acts 1.23. & 14.23.&6.3,4 *Mat.*18.17. 1 *Cor.*5.4,5.

3. This Government of the Church is a mixt Government, (and so hath been acknowledged long before the term of *Independency* was heard of) In respect of *Christ*, the Head and King of the Church, and the Soveraign power residing in him, and exercised by him, it is a *Monarchy*; in respect of the Body or *Brotherhood* of the Church, and power from Christ granted unto them, it resembles a *Democracy*; in respect

*Rev.*3.7.

1 *Cor.*5.12

spect of the *Presbytery*, and power committed unto them, it is an *Aristocracy*. 1 *Tim.*5.27.

4. The Soveraign Power which is peculiar unto Christ, is exercised, 1. In calling the Church out of the world unto holy fellowship with him self. 2. In instituting the Ordinances of his Worship, and appointing his Ministers and Officers for the dispensing of them. 3. In giving Laws for the ordering of all our wayes, and the wayes of his House. 4. In giving power and life to all his Institutions, and to his people by them. 5. In protecting and delivering his Church against and from all the enemies of their peace. *Gal.*1.4. *Rev.*5.8,9. *Mat.*28.20 *Eph.*4.8.11 *Jam.*4.12. *Isa.*33.22. 1 *Tim.*3.15 2 *Cor.*10.4,5. *Isa.*32.2 *Luk.*1.71.

5. The power granted by Christ unto the Body of the Church and *Brotherhood*, is a Prerogative or Priviledge which the Church doth exercise, 1. In *Chusing* their own Officers, whether Elders or Deacons. 2. In *Admission* of their own Members; and therefore there is great reason they should have power to remove any from their fellowship again. Hence in case of offence any Brother hath power to convince and admonish an offending Brother; and in case of not hearing him, to Acts 6 3,5. & 14.23. & 9.26 *Mat.*18.15, 16,17.

to take one or two more to ſet on the Admonition: and in caſe of not hearing them, to proceed to tell the Church: and as his offence may require, the whole Church hath power to proceed to the cenſure of him, whether by Admonition or Excommunication: and upon his Repentance to reſtore him again unto his former communion.

*Tit.*3.10
*Col.*4.17
*Mat.*18.17
2*Cor.*2.7,8

6. In caſe an Elder offend incorrigibly, the matter ſo requiring, as the Church had power to call him to office ſo they have power according to order (the counſel of other Churches, where it may be had, directing thereto) to remove him from his office, and being now but a Member, in caſe he adde contumacy to his ſin the Church that had power to receive him into their fellowſhip, hath alſo the ſame power to caſt him out, that they have concerning any other Member.

Col 4.17.
*Rom.*16.17.
*Mat.*18.17

7. Church Government, or Rule, is placed by Chriſt in the officers of the Church, who are therefore called *Rulers*, while they rule with God: yet in caſe of Mal-Adminiſtration, they are ſubject to the power of the Church, as hath been ſaid before. The holy Ghoſt

1 *Tim.*5.17.
*Heb.*13.17.
1 *Theſſ.*5,12.

Ghoſt frequently, yea alwayes, where it mentioneth Church Rule, & Church-Government, aſcribeth it to Elders: whereas the work and duty of the people is expreſſed in the phraſe of *obeying their Elders*, and *ſubmitting themſelves unto them in the Lord*. So as it is manifeſt, that an organick or compleat Church is a Body Politick, conſiſting of ſome that are Governours, & ſome that are governed in the Lord.

Rom. 12.8. 1 *Tim.* 5.17 1 *Cor.* 12.28, 29. *Heb.* 13.7, 17.

8. The power which Chriſt hath committed to the Elders, is to feed and rule the Church of God, and accordingly to call the Church together upon any weighty occaſion: when the Members ſo called, without juſt cauſe, may not refuſe to come, nor when they are come, depart before they are diſmiſſed, nor ſpeak in the Church, before they have leave from the Elders; nor continue ſo doing when they require ſilence: nor may they oppoſe nor contradict the judgement or ſentence of the Elders, without ſufficient and weighty cauſe, becauſe ſuch practices are manifeſtly contrary unto Order and Government, and inlets of diſturbance, and tend to confuſion.

Act. 20.28. & 6,2. *Numb.* 16.12. *Ezek.* 46.10. *Acts* 13.15. *Hoſ.* 4.4.

9. It belongs alſo unto the Elders before

to examine any Officers or Members before they be received of the Church; to receive the Accuſations brought to the Church, and to prepare them for the Churches hearing. In handling of offences and other matters before the Church, they have power to declare and publiſh the counſel and will of God touching the ſame, and to pronounce Sentence with conſent of the Church. Laſtly. They have power, when they diſmiſs the people, to bleſs them in the Name of the Lord.

*Rev.*2.2. 1 *Tim.*5.19 *Acts* 21.18, 22,23 1 *Cor.*5 4,5.

*Numb.*6.23, to 26.

10. This power of Government in the Elders doth not any wiſe prejudice the power of priviledge in the Brotherhood; as neither the power of priviledge in the Brethren, doth prejudice the power of Government in the Elders, but they may ſweetly agree together: as we may ſee in the example of the Apoſtles, furniſhed with the greateſt Church power, who took in the concurrence and conſent of the Brethren in Church-Adminiſtrations. Alſo that Scripture, 2 *Cor.*2. 9. & 10 6 do declare, that what the Churches were to act and do in theſe matters, they were to do in a way of obedience, and that not only to the dire-

Acts 14.15.23 & 6.2. 1 *Cor.*5.4, 2 *Cor.*2.6,7.

*Heb.*13.17.

direction of the Apoſtles, but alſo of their ordinary Elders.

11. From the premiſes, namely, That the ordinary power of Government belonging only to the Elders, Power of Priviledge remaineth with the Brotherhood (as the power of judgement in matters of Cenſure, and power of liberty in matters of liberty) It followeth, that in an Organick Church, and right Adminiſtration, all Church-Acts proceed after the manner of a mixt Adminiſtration, ſo as no Church-act can be conſummated or perfected without the conſent of both.

CHAP. XI.

Of the Maintenance of Church-Officers.

THe Apoſtle concludes, that neceſſary and ſufficient Maintenance is due unto the Miniſters of the Word, from the Law of Nature and Nations, from the Law of *Moſes*, the Equity thereof, as alſo the Rule of common Reaſon. Moreover, the Scripture doth not only call Elders *Labourers* & *Workmen*, but alſo ſpeaking of them

1 *Cor.* 9. 14, 15. *Mat.* 9. 38. & 10. 10. 1 *Tim.* 5. 18

doth ſay, that *The Labourer is worthy of his hire*: and requires that he which is taught in the Word ſhould communicate to him in all good things; and mentions it as an ordinance of the Lord, That they which preach the Goſpel, ſhould live of the Goſpel; and forbiddeth the muzling of the mouth of the Ox that treadeth out the corn.

*Gal.*6.6.

1 *Cor.* 9.9.14.
1 *Tim.*5.18

2. The Scriptures alledged, requiring this Maintenance as a bounden duty, and due debt, and not as a matter of Alms and free gift, therefore people are not at liberty to do or not to do, what and when they pleaſe in this matter, no more then in any other commanded duty and ordinance of the Lord; but ought of duty to miniſter of their *carnal things*, to them that labour among them in the Word and Doctrine, as well as they ought to pay any other Workmen their wages, and to diſcharge and ſatisfie their other debts, or to ſubmit themſelves to obſerve any other ordinance of the Lord.

*Rom.*15.27.
1 *Cor.*9.21.

4. The Apoſtle (*Gal.*6.6.) enjoyning, that he which is taught communicate to him that teacheth *in all good things*, doth not leave it arbitrary, what or how much a man ſhall give, or in what

*Gal.*6.6.

1 *Cor.*16.2

what proportion, but even the latter, as well as the former is prescribed and appointed by the Lord.

4. Not only Members of Churches, but *all that are taught in the Word*, are to contribute unto him that teacheth, in all good things. In case that Congregations are defective in their Contributions, the Deacons are to call upon them to do their duty: if their call sufficeth not, the Church by her power is to require it of their Members; and where Church-power, through the corruption of men, doth not, or cannot attain the end, the Magistrate is to see that the Ministry be duely provided for, as appears from the commended example of *Nehemiah*. The Magistrates are Nursing-fathers, and Nursing-mothers, and stand charged with the custody of both Tables; because it is better to prevent a scandal that it may not come, and easier also, then to remove it when it is given. Its most suitable to Rule, that by the Churches care each man should know his proportion according to Rule, what he should do, before he do it, that so his judgement & heart may be satisfied in what he doth. & just offence prevented in what is done.

*Gal.*6.6.

Acts 6.3,4.

*Neh.*13.11.

*Isa.*49.23.

2 *Cor.*8.13,14

CHAP. XII.

Of the Admiſſion of Members into the Church.

THE doors of the Churches of Chriſt upon earth do not by Gods appointment ſtand ſo wide open, that all ſorts of people, good or bad, may freely enter therein at their pleaſure, but ſuch as are admitted thereto as Members, ought to be examined and tried firſt, whether they be fit and meet to be received into Church-ſociety, or not. The Eunuch of *Ethiopia*, before his admiſſion, was examined by *Philip*, whether he did believe on Jeſus Chriſt with all his heart. The Angel of the Church at *Epheſus* is commended, for trying ſuch as ſaid they were Apoſtles, and were not. There is like reaſon for trying of them that profeſs themſelves to be Believers. The Officers are charged with the keeping of the doors of the Church, and therefore are in a ſpecial manner to make trial of the fitneſs of ſuch who enter. Twelve Angels are ſet at the gates of the Temple, leſt ſuch as were *Ceremo-*

2 *Chro.* 23. 19. *Mat* 13. 25. & 22. 12.

Act. 8. 37.

Rev. 2. 2

Acts 9. 26.

Rev. 21. 12. 2 *Chro.* 23. 19.

nially

monially unclean ſhould enter thereinto

2. The things which are requiſite to be found in all Church members, are *Repentance* from ſin, and *Faith* in Jeſus Chriſt: and therefore theſe are the things whereof men are to be examined at their admiſſion into the Church, and which then they muſt profeſs and hold forth in ſuch ſort as may ſatisfie *rational charity* that the things are there indeed. *John Baptiſt* admitted men to Baptiſm confeſſing and bewailing their ſins: and of other it is ſaid, that *they came, and confeſſed, and ſhewed their deeds.*

Act. 2.38, *to* 42. & 8.37.

*Mat.*3.6.

Acts 19.18.

3. The weakeſt meaſure of faith is to be accepted in thoſe that deſire to be admitted into the Church, becauſe weak Chriſtians, if *ſincere*, have the ſubſtance of that Faith, Repentance and Holineſs which is required in Church-members; and ſuch have moſt need of the Ordinances for their confirmation and growth in grace. The Lord Jeſus would not quench the ſmoaking flax, nor break the bruiſed reed, but gather the tender lambs in his arms, and carry them gently in his boſome. Such charity and tenderneſs is to be uſed, as the weakeſt Chriſtian, if ſincere, may

*Rom.*14.1.

*Mat.*12.20. *Iſa.*40.11.

not be excluded nor diſcouraged. Severity of examination is to be avoided.

4. In caſe any through exceſſive fear, or other infirmity, be unable to make their perſonal Relation of their ſpiritual eſtate in publick, it is ſufficient that the Elders having received private ſatisfaction, make relation thereof in publick before the Church, they teſtifying their aſſents thereunto: this being the way that tendeth moſt to edification. But whereas perſons are of greater abilityes, there it is moſt expedient that they make their Relations and confeſſions perſonally with their own mouth, as *David* profeſſeth of himſelf. *Pſal.66.16.*

5. A perſonal and publick Confeſſion, and declaring of Gods manner of working upon the ſoul, is both lawful, expedient and uſeful, in ſundry reſpects, & upon ſundry grounds. Thoſe three thouſand, *Acts* 2.37.41. before they were admitted by the Apoſtles, did manifeſt that they were pricked in their hearts at *Peters* Sermon, together with earneſt deſire to be delivered from their ſins, which now wounded their Conſciences, and their ready receiving of the word of Promiſe and

Exhor

Exhortation We are to be ready to render a reaſon of the hope that is in us to every one that asketh us; therefore we muſt be able and ready upon any occaſion to declare and ſhew our Repentance for ſin, Faith unfeigned, and effectual Calling, becauſe theſe are the reaſon of a well grounded hope. *I have not hidden thy righteouſneſs from the great congregation.* Pſal.40.10

1 *Pet.*3.15. *Heb.*11 1. *Eph.*1.18.

6. This profeſſion of Faith and Repentance as it muſt be made by ſuch at their Admiſſion, that were never in Church ſociety before; ſo nothing hindereth, but the ſame way alſo be performed by ſuch as have formerly been Members of ſome other Church, and the Church to which they now joyn themſelves as Member may lawfully require the ſame. Thoſe three thouſand, *Acts* 2. which made their Confeſſion, were Members of the Church of the Jews before, ſo were they that were baptized by *John*. Churches may erre in their admiſſion; and perſons regularly admitted, may fall into offence. Otherwiſe, if Churches might obtrude their Members or if Church-members might obtrude themſelves upon other Churches with-

*Mat.*3.5,6. *Gal.*2.4. 1 *Tim.*5.24

out due trial, the matter ſo requiring, both the liberty of Churches would hereby be infringed in that they might not examine thoſe, concerning whoſe fitneſs for communion they were unſatisfied: and beſides the infringing of their liberty, the Churches themſelves would unavoidably be corrupted, and the Ordinances defiled, whilſt they might not refuſe, but muſt receive the unworthy: which is contrary unto the Scripture, teaching that all Churches are Siſters, and therefore equal.

Cant. 8. 8

7. The like trial is to be required from ſuch Members of the Church as were born in the ſame, or received their Membership, and were baptized in their infancy, or minority, by virtue of the Covenant of their Parents, when being grown up unto years of diſcretion, they ſhall deſire to be made partakers of the Lords Supper: unto which, becauſe holy things muſt not be given to the unworthy, therefore it is requiſite, that theſe as well as others ſhould come to their trial and examination, and manifeſt their Faith and Repentance by an open Profeſſion thereof, before they are received to the Lords Supper, and otherwiſe not to

Mat. 7. 6.
1 *Cor.* 11. 27.

to be admitted thereunto. Yet theſe Church-members that were ſo born, or received in their Childhood, before they are capable of being made partakers of full Communion, have many Priviledges which others (not Church-members) have not: they are in Covenant with God, have the Seal thereof upon them, *viz.* Baptiſm; and ſo if not regenerated, yet are in a more hopeful way of attaining regenerating grace, and all the ſpiritual bleſſings both of the Covenant and Seal: they are alſo under Church-watch, and conſequently ſubject to the Reprehenſions Admonitions, and Cenſures thereof, for their healing and amendment, as need ſhall require.

CHAP. XIII.

Of Church-members their Removal from one Church to another, and of Recommendation and Diſmiſſion.

CHurch members may not remove or depart from the Church, and ſo one from another as they pleaſe, nor without juſt and weighty cauſe, but ought to live and dwell together, forаſmuch

*Heb.*10.25. aſmuch as they are commanded, not to forſake the aſſembling of themſelves together. Such departure tends to the diſſolution and ruine of the Body, as the pulling of ſtones and pieces of timber from the Building, and of members from the natural Body, tend to the deſtruction of the whole.

2. It is therefore the duty of Church-members, in ſuch times and places where counſel may be had to conſult with the Church whereof they are *Prov.*11.14 Members about their Removal. that accordingly they having their approbation, may be encouraged, or otherwiſe deſiſt. They who are joyned with conſent, ſhould not depart without conſent, except forced thereunto

3. If a Members departure be manifeſtly unſafe and ſinful, the Church *Rom.*14.23. may not conſent thereunto; for in ſo *1 Tim.*5.22 doing, they ſhould not act in Faith, and *Act.*21.14. ſhould partake with him in his ſin If the caſe be doubtful, and the perſon not to be perſwaded, it ſeemeth beſt to leave the matter unto God, and not forcibly to detain him.

4 Juſt reaſons for a Members Removal of himſelf from the Church are 1. If a man cannot continue without par-

taking in ſin. 2. In caſe of perſonal Perſecution: ſo *Paul* departed from the Diſciples at *Damaſcus*. Alſo in caſe of general Perſecution, when all are ſcattered. 3. In caſe of reall and not only pretended want of competent Subſiſtence, a door being opened for better Supply in another place, together with the means of ſpiritual Edification. In theſe, or like caſes, a Member may lawfully remove, and the Church cannot lawfully detain him.

*Eph.*5.11. *Acts* 9.25, 29, 30.& 8.1.

*Neh.*13.20.

5. To ſeparate from a Church, either out of contempt of their holy fellowſhip, or out of covetouſneſs, or for greater enlargements, with juſt grief to the Church; or out of Schiſm, or want of love, and out of a ſpirit of contention in reſpect of ſome unkindneſs, or ſome evil only conceived, or indeed in the Church, which might & ſhould be tolerated and healed with a ſpirit of meekneſs, and of which evil the Church is not yet convinced (thô perhaps himſelf be) nor admoniſhed: for theſe or the like reaſons to withdraw from publick communion, in Word, or Seals, or Cenſures, is unlawful and ſinful.

2 *Tim.*4.10. *Rom.*16.17. *Jude v.*19. *Eph.*4.2,3. *Col.*3.13 *Gal.*6.1.2.

6. Such Members as have orderly removed their habitation, ought to

joyn

Isa.56.8. *Acts 9.26.* joyn themſelves unto the Church in order where they do inhabit, if it may be: otherwiſe, they can neither perform the duties nor receive the priviledges of Members. Such an example tolerated in ſome, is apt to corrupt others, which if many ſhould follow, would threaten the diſſolution and *1 Cor.14.33.* confuſion of Churches, contrary to the Scripture.

7. Order requires, that a Member thus removing, have Letters Teſtimo- *Acts 18.27.* nial, and of Diſmiſſion from the Church whereof he yet is, unto the Church whereunto he deſireth to be joyned, leſt the Church ſhould be deluded; that the Church may receive him in faith, and not be corrupted by receiving deceivers, and falſe Brethren. Until the perſon diſmiſſed be received into another Church, he ceaſeth not by his Letters of diſmiſſion to be a Member of the Church whereof he was The Church cannot make a Member no Member, but by Excommunication.

Rom.16.1.2 *2 Cor.3.1.* 8. If a Member be called to remove only for a time, where a Church is, Letters of Recommendation are requiſite, and ſufficient for communion with

with that Church, in the Ordinances, & in their Watch; as *Phœbe*, a servant of the Church at *Cenchrea*, had Letters written for her to the Church at *Rome*, that she might be received as becometh Saints.

9 Such Letters of Recommendation and Dismission, were written for *Apollos*; for *Marcus* to the *Colossians*; for *Phœbe* to the *Romans*, for sundry others to other Churches. And the Apostle telleth us, that some persons, not sufficiently known otherwise, have special need of such Letters, though he for his part had no need thereof. The use of them is to be a benefit and help to the party for whom they are written, and for the furthering of his receiving amongst the Saints in the place whereto he goeth, and the due satisfaction of them in their receiving of him.

Acts 18.27. *Col.*4.10 *Rom.* 16.1. 2 *Cor.*3.1.

CHAP. IV.

Of Excommunication, and other Censures.

THe Censures of the Church are appointed by Christ for the preventing, removing, and healing of offences in the Church; for the reclaiming

1 *Tim.*5.20

*Deu.*17.12,13 *Jude v.*19 *Deut.*13.11. *1 Cor.*5,6. *Rom.*2.24. *Rev.* 2.14,15. 16,20

ing and gaining of offending Brethren, for the deterring others from the like offences, for purging out the leaven which may infect the whole lump; for vindicating the honour of Christ, and of his Church, and the holy profession of the Gospel; and for preventing of the wrath of God, that may justly fall upon the Church, if they should suffer his Covenant, and the Seals thereof to be profaned by notorious and obstinate offenders.

*Mat.*5.23,24. *Luke* 17.3,4.

2. If an offence be private, (one Brother offending another) the offender is to goe and acknowledge his Repentance for it unto his offended Brother, who is then to forgive him, but if the offender neglect or refuse to do it, the Brother offended is to goe and convince and admonish him of it, between themselves privately: if thereupon the offender be brought to repent of his offence, the admonisher hath won his Brother; but if the offender hear not his Brother, the Brother offended is to take with him one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established, (whether the word of Admonition, if the offender receive it; or

*Mat.*18.15.

*Ver.*16.

the

the word of Complaint, if he refuse it) for if he refuse it, the offended Brother is by the mouth of the Elders to tell the Church and if he hear the Church, and declare the same by penitent Confession, he is recovered and gained: & if the Church discern him to be willing to hear, yet not fully convinced of his offence, as in case of Heresie, they are to dispense to him a publick Admonition; which declaring the offender to lye under the publick offence of the Church, doth thereby withhold or suspend him from the holy fellowship of the Lords Supper, till his offence be removed by penitent Confession. If he still continue obstinate, they are to cast him out by Excommunication.

*Mat.*18.17.

*Tit.*3.10.

*Mat.*18.17.

3. But if the offence be more publick at first, and of a more hainous and criminal nature, to wit, such as are condemned by the light of nature; then the Church, without such gradual proceeding, is to cast out the offender from their holy communion, for the further mortifyimg of his sin, and the healing of his Soul in the day of the Lord Jesus.

1*Cor.*5.4,5,11

4. In dealing with an offender, great care is to be taken, that we be neither over-

strict or rigorous, nor too indulgent or remiss: our proceeding herein ought to be with a spirit of meekness, considering our selves lest we also be tempted; and that the best of us have need of much forgiveness from the Lord. Yet the winning and healing of the offenders soul, being the end of these endeavours, we must not dawb with untempered morter, nor heal the wounds of our Brethren slightly. On some have compassion, others save with fear.

Gal.6.1.

Mat.18.34,35
Ezek.13.10.

5. while the offender remains excommunicate, the Church is to refrain from all Member-like communion with him in spiritual things, and also from all familiar communion with him in civil things, further then the necessity of natural, or domestical, or civil Relations do require; and are therefore to forbear to eat and drink with him, that he may be ashamed.

Mat.18.17.
1 Cor.5.11.
2 Thess.3.6,14

6. Excommunication being a spiritual punishment, it doth not prejudice the Excommunicate in, nor deprive him of his Civil Rights, and therefore toucheth not Princes, or other Magistrates, in point of their Civil Dignity or Authority: & the Excommunicate being

being but as a Publican, & a Heathen, Heathens being lawfully permitted to come to hear the Word in Church-Assemblyes, we acknowledge therefore the like liberty of hearing the Word may be permitted to persons excommunicate, that is permitted unto Heathen. And because we are not without hope of his recovery, we are not to account him as an enemy, but to admonish him as a Brother. *1 Cor.* 14 24, 25. *2 Thess.* 3. 14.

7. If the Lord sanctifie the Censure to the offender, so as by the grace of Christ he doth testifie his Repentance with humble confession of his sin, and judging of himself, giving glory unto God, the Church is then to forgive him, and to comfort him, and to restore him to the wonted brotherly communion, which formerly he enjoyed with them. *2 Cor.* 2. 7, 8.

8. The suffering of profane or scandalous livers to continue in fellowship, and partake in the Sacraments, is doubtless a great sin in those that have power in their hand to redress it, and doe it not. Nevertheless, inasmuch as Christ and his Apostles in their times, and the Prophets and other godly in theirs, did lawfully partake of the *Rev.* 2. 14, 15, 20. *Mat.* 23. 3. *Act.* 3. 1.

Lords commanded Ordinances in the Jewiſh Church, and neither taught nor practiſed ſeparation from the ſame, though unworthy ones were permitted therein: and inaſmuch as the faithful in the Church of *Corinth*, wherein were many unworthy perſons and practices, are never commanded to abſent themſelves from the Sacraments, becauſe of the ſame: therefore the godly in like caſes are not preſently to ſeparate.

1 *Cor.*6.& 15.12.

9. As ſeparation from ſuch a Church wherein profane and ſcandalous perſons are tolerated, is not preſently neceſſary; ſo for the Members thereof, otherwiſe unworthy, hereupon to abſtain from communicating with ſuch a Church in the participation of the Sacraments, is unlawful. For as it were unreaſonable for an innocent perſon to be puniſhed for the faults of others, wherein he hath no hand, and whereunto he gave no conſent: ſo is it more unreaſonable, that a godly man ſhould neglect duty, and puniſh himſelf, in not coming for his portion in the bleſſing of the Seals, as he ought, becauſe others are ſuffered to come that ought not: eſpecially, conſidering that himſelf doth neither conſent to their ſin,

2 *Chro.*30.18. *Gen.*18.25.

nor

nor to their approaching to the Ordinance in their ſin, nor to the neglect of others who ſhould put them away, and doe not; but on the contray doth heartily mourn for theſe things, modeſtly and ſeaſonably ſtir up others to doe their duty. If the Church cannot be reformed, they may uſe their liberty, as is ſpecified, *Chap.* 13. *Sect.* 4. But this all the godly are bound unto, even every one to do his endeavour, according to his power and place, that the unworthy may be duely proceeded againſt, by the Church to whom this matter doth appertain. *Ezek.* 9. 4.

CHAP. XV.

Of the Communion of Churches one with another.

ALthough Churches be diſtinct, & therefore may not be confounded one with another, and equal, and therefore have not dominion one over another: yet all the Churches ought to preſerve *Church-Communion* one with another, becauſe they are all united unto Chriſt, not only as a myſtical, but as a Political Head: whence is derived a Communion ſuitable thereunto. *Rev.* 1. 4. *Cant.* 8. 8 *Rom.* 16. 16. 1 *Cor.* 16. 19. *Act.* 15. 23. *Rev.* 2. 1.

2. The *Communion of Churches* is exercised sundry wayes. 1. By way of *mutual Care*, in taking thought for one anothers welfare. 2. By way of *Consultation* one with another, when we have occasion to require the judgement and counsel of other Churches, touching any person or cause wherwith they may be better acquainted then our selves. As the Church of *Antioch* consulted with the Apostles & Elders of the Church at *Jerusalem*, about the question of Circumcision of the Gentiles, & about the false Teachers that broached that Doctrine. In which case, when any Church wanteth light or peace amongst themselves, it is a way of Communion of Churches (according to the Word) to meet together by their Elders and other Messengers in a Synod, to consider and argue the Points in doubt or difference; and having found out the way of Truth and Peace, to commend the same by their Letters & Messengers to the Churches whom the same may concern. But if a Church be rent with Divisions among themselves, or lye under any open scandal, and yet refuse to consult with other Churches, for healing or removing of the

Cant. 8.8

Act. 15.2.

Act. 15.6

Ver. 22. 23.

the ſame, it is matter of juſt offence both to the Lord Jeſus, and to other Churches, as bewraying too much want of mercy and faithfulneſs, not to ſeek to bind up the breaches & wounds of the Church and Brethren: and therefore the ſtate of ſuch a Church calleth aloud upon other Churches, to exerciſe a fuller act of brotherly communion, to wit, by way of Admonition. 3. A third way then of communion of Churches, is by way of *Admonition*; to wit, in caſe any publick offence be found in a Church, which they either diſcern not, or are ſlow in proceeding to uſe the means for the removing and healing of. *Paul* had no authority over *Peter*, yet when he ſaw *Peter* not walking with a right foot, he publickly rebuked him before the Church. Though Churches have no more authority one over another, then one Apoſtle had over another, yet as one Apoſtle might admoniſh another, ſo may one Church admoniſh another, and yet without uſurpation. In which caſe, if the Church that lieth under offence, doe not hearken to the Church that doth admoniſh her, the Church is to acquaint other neighbour

Ezek. 34.4.

Gal. 2.11,to 14

Mat. 18.15,16 17. *by proportion.*

Churches with that offence which the offending Church ſtill lyeth under, together with the neglect of their Brotherly Admonition given unto them: whereupon thoſe other Churches are to joyn in ſeconding the Admonition formerly given; and if ſtill the offending Church continue in obſtinacy and impenitency, they may forbear communion with them, and are to proceed to make uſe of the help of a Synod, or Council of neighbour Churches walking orderly (if a greater cannot conveniently be had) for their conviction. If they hear not the Synod the Synod having declared them to be obſtinate, particular Churches approving and accepting the judgement of the Synod, are to declare the Sentence of Non-communion reſpectively concerning them: and thereupon out of Religious care to keep their own communion pure, they may juſtly withdraw themſelves from participation with them at the Lords Table, and from ſuch other acts of holy communion, as the communion of Churches doth otherwiſe allow and require. Nevertheleſs, if any Members of ſuch a Church as liveth under publick offence, do not conſent to the offence

offence of the Church, but doe in due ſort bear witneſs againſt it, they are ſtill to be received to wonted communion, for it is not equal that the innocent ſhould ſuffer with the offenſive. Yea furthermore, if ſuch innocent Members after due waiting in the uſe of all good means for the healing of the offence of their own Church, ſhall at laſt (with the allowance of the counſel of neighbour-Churches) withdraw from the fellowſhip of their own Church, and offer themſelves to the fellowſhip of another, we judge it lawful for the other Church to receive them (being otherwiſe fit) as if they had been orderly diſmiſſed to them from their own Church. 4. A fourth way of Communion of Churches is by way of *Participation.* The Members of one Church occaſionally coming to another, we willingly admit them to partake with us at the Lords Table, it being the Seal of our communion, not only with Chriſt, nor only with the Members of our own Church, but alſo of all the Churches of the Saints: in which regard, we refuſe not to baptize their children preſented to us, if either their own Miniſter be abſent, or ſuch a

Gen. 18. 25.

1 *Cor.* 12. 13.

fruit of holy fellowſhip be deſired with us. In like caſe ſuch Churches as are furniſhed with more Miniſters then one, doe willingly afford one of their own Miniſters to ſupply the place of an abſent or ſick Miniſter of another Church for a needful ſeaſon. 5. A fifth way of Church-communion is by way of *Recommendation*, when the Member of one Church, hath occaſion to reſide in another Church, if but for a ſeaſon, we commend him to their watchful fellowſhip by Letters of Recommendation, but if he be called to ſettle his abode there, we commit him according to his deſire to the fellowſhip of their Covenant, by Letters of Diſmiſſion. 6. A ſixth way of Church-communion is in caſe of *Need* to miniſter relief and ſuccor one unto another, either of able Members, to furniſh them with Officers, or of outward ſupport, to the neceſſityes of poorer Churches, as did the Churches of the Gentiles contribute liberally to the poor Saints at *Jeruſalem*.

Rom. 16.1.

Acts 18.27.

Acts 11.22.

Ver. 29.

Rom. 15.26,27

3 When a company of Believers purpoſe to gather into Church-fellowſhip, it is requiſite for their ſafer proceeding, & the maintaining of the Communion

of

of Churches, that they ſignifie their intent unto the neighbour Churches, walking according unto the Order of the Goſpel, and deſire their preſence, and help, and right hand of fellowſhip, which they ought readily to give unto them, when their is no juſt cauſe to except againſt their proceedings. *Gal.2.1,2,& 9.by proportion.*

4 Beſides theſe ſeveral wayes of Communion, there is alſo a way of propagation of Churches: when a Church ſhall grow too numerous, it is a way and fit ſeaſon, to propagate one Church out of another, by ſending forth ſuch of their Members as are willing to remove, and to procure ſome Officers to them, as may enter with them into Church eſtate amongſt themſelves. As Bees, when the Hive is too full, iſſue forth by Swarms, and are gathered into other Hives, ſo the Churches of Chriſt may doe the ſame upon like neceſſity; and therein hold forth to them the right hand of fellowſhip, both in their gathering into a Church, and in the Ordination of their Officers. *Iſa.40.20. Cant.8.8,9.*

CHAP.

CHAP. XVI.

Of Synods.

SYnods orderly aſſembled, and rightly proceeding according to
Act. 15.2 to 15 the Pattern, *Acts* 15. we acknowledge as the Ordinance of Chriſt: and tho not abſolutely neceſſary to the Being, yet many times, through the iniquity of men, and perverſeneſs of times, neceſſary to the well-being of Churches, for the eſtabliſhment of Truth and Peace therein.

2. Synods being Spiritual and Eccleſiaſtical Aſſemblyes, are therefore made up of Spiritual and Eccleſiaſtical Cauſes. The next efficient Cauſe of them under Chriſt, is the power of the Churches, ſending forth their Elders
Act.15.2,3. and other Meſſengers, who being met together in the Name of Chriſt, are the matter of a Synod; and they in Arguing and Debating, and Determi-
Ver.6. ning matters of Religion according to
Ver.7,to 23. to the Word, and publiſhing the ſame to the Churches it concerneth, do put
Ver.31. forth the proper and formal acts of a Synod, to the conviction of Errours &
Act.16.4,15. Hereſies, and the eſtabliſhment of

Truth

Truth and Peace in the Churches, which is the end of a Synod.

3. Magiſtrates have power to call a Synod, by calling to the Churches to ſend forth their Elders and other Meſſengers, to counſel and aſſiſt them in matters of Religion; but yet the conſtituting of a Synod is a Church-act, and may be tranſacted by the Churches, even when Civil Magiſtrates may be enemies to Churches and to Church-Aſſemblyes. *2 Chron.* 29. 4, 5, *to* 11. *Acts.* 15.

4. It belongeth unto Synods and Councils, to debate and determine controverſyes of Faith, and Caſes of Conſcience; to clear from the Word holy directions for the holy Worſhip of God, and good Government of the Church: to bear witneſs againſt Mal-Adminiſtration and corruption in Doctrine or manners in any particular Church; and to give directions for the Reformation thereof: not to exerciſe Church-cenſures in way of Diſcipline, nor any other act of Church-Authority or Jurisdiction, which that Preſidential Synod did forbear. *Act.* 15. 1, 2, 6, 7 *1 Chron.* 15. 18 *2 Chr.* 29. 6, 7. *Acts* 15. 24, 28, 29.

5. The Synods Directions and Determinations, ſo far as conſonant to the Word of God, are to be received with reverence

reverence and ſubmiſſion; not only for their argreement therewith (which is the principal ground thereof, and without which they bind not at all) but alſo ſecondarily for the power whereby they are made, as being an Ordinance of God appointed thereunto in in his Word.

Acts 15.

6. Becauſe it is difficult, if not impoſſible, for many Churches to come together in one place, in all their Members univerſally; therefore they may aſſemble by their Delegates or Meſſengers, as the Church at *Antioch* went not all to *Jeruſalem*, but ſome ſelect men for that purpoſe. Becauſe none are or ſhould be more fit to know the ſtate of the Churches, nor to adviſe of wayes for the good thereof, then Elders; therefore it is fit that in the choice of the Meſſengers for ſuch Aſſemblyes, they have ſpecial reſpect unto ſuch: yet inaſmuch as not only *Paul* and *Barnabas*, but certain others alſo were ſent to *Jeruſalem* from *Antioch*, *Acts* 15. and when they were come to *Jeruſalem*, not only the Apoſtles and Elders, but other Brethren alſo do aſſemble, and meet about the matter: therefore Synods are to conſiſt both of Elders

Acts 15.2.

Acts 15.2, 22, 23.

Elders, and other Church members, endued with gifts, and sent by the Churches, not excluding the presence of any Brethren in the Churches.

CHAP. XVII.

Of the Civil Magistrates Power in matters Ecclesiastical.

IT is lawful, profitable and necessary for Christians to gather themselves together into Church-estate & therein to exercise all the Ordinances of Christ according unto the Word, although the consent of the Magistrate could not be had thereunto, because the Apostles and Christians in their time did frequently thus practise, when the Magistrates being all of them Jewish or Pagan, and most persecuting Enemies, would give no countenance or consent to such matters. *Acts* 2.41, 47. & 4.1,2,3.

2. Church Government stands in no opposition to Civil Government of Common-wealths, nor any way intrencheth upon the Authority of Civil Magistrates in their Jurisdictions; nor any whit weakeneth their hands in governing, but rather strengtheneth them *John* 18.36. *Acts* 25.8.

them, and furthereth the People in yielding more hearty and conscionable obedience unto them, whatsoever some ill affected persons to the wayes of Christ have suggested, to alienate the affections of Kings and Princes from the Ordinances of Christ; as if the Kingdome of Christ in his Church could not rise and stand, without the falling and weakening of their Government, which is also of Christ: whereas the contrary is most true, that they may both stand together and flourish, the one being helpful unto the other, in their distinct and due Administrations.

Isa.49.23.

3. The power and authority of Magistrates is not for the restraining of Churches, or any other good works, but for helping in and furthering thereof; and therefore the consent and countenance of Magistrates, when it may be had, is not to be sleighted, or lightly esteemed: but on the contrary, it is part of that honour due to Christian Magistrates, to desire and crave their consent and approbation therein: which being obtained, the Churches may then proceed in their way with much more encouragement & comfort.

Rom.13.4.
1 Tim.2.2.

4. It

4. It is not in the power of Magiſtrates to compel their ſubjects to become Church-Members, & to partake at the Lords Table; for the Prieſts are reproved that brought unworthy ones into the Sanctuary: then, as it was unlawful for the Prieſts, ſo it is as unlawful to be done by civil Magiſtrates. thoſe whom the Church is to caſt out if they were in, the Magiſtrate ought not to thruſt them into the Church, nor to hold them therein. *Ezek.* 44.7,9. 1 *Cor.* 5.11.

5. As it is unlawful for Church-officers to meddle with the ſword of the Magiſtrate, ſo it is unlawful for the Magiſtrate to meddle with the work proper to Church-officers. The acts of *Moſes* and *David*, who were not only Princes, but Prophets, were extraordinary, therefore not imitable. Againſt ſuch uſurpation, the Lord witneſſed by ſmiting *Uzziah* with leproſy, for preſuming to offer Incenſe. *Mat.* 2.25,26. 2 *Chron.* 26. 16,19.

6. It is the duty of the Magiſtrate to take care of matters of Religion, & to improve his Civil Authority for the obſerving of the duties commanded in the firſt, as well as for obſerving of the duties commanded in the ſecond Table. They are called Gods. The end *Pſal.* 82.8.

of

of the Magistrates Office, is not onely the quiet and peaceable life of the subject in matters of Righteousness and Honesty, but also in matters of godliness, yea of all godliness. *Moses*, *Joshua*, *David*, *Solomon*, *Asa*, *Jehoshaphat*, *Hezekiah*, *Josiah*, are much commended by the holy Ghost, for the putting forth their Authority in matters of Religion: on the contrary, such Kings as have been failing this way, are frequently taxed & reproved by the Lord. And not only the Kings of Judah, but also *Job*, *Nehemiah*, the King of *Nineveh*, *Darius*, *Artaxerxes*, *Nebuchadnezzar*, whom none looked at as Types of Christ, (though were it so, there were no place for any just objection) are commended in the Book of God, for exercising their Authority this way.

1 *Tim.* 2. 1, 2.

1 *Kings* 15. 14 & 22. 43. 2 *King.* 12. 3. & 14. 4. & 15. 35.

1 *King.* 20. 42 *Job* 29. 25. & 31. 26, 28. *Neh.* 13. *Jonah* 3. 7. *Ezra.* 7. *Dan.* 3. 29.

7. The object of the Power of the Magistrate are not things meerly inward, and so not subject to his cognizance and view, as Unbelief, hardness of heart, erroneous opinions not vented, but only such things as are acted by the outward man: neither is their power to be exercised in commanding such acts of the outward man, and punishing

nishing the neglect thereof as are but meer inventions & devices of men, but about such acts as are commanded & forbidden in the Word: yea, such as the Word doth clearly determine, though not always clearly to the judgment of the Magistrate or others, yet clearly in it self. In these he of right ought to put forth his Authority, though oft-times actually he doth it not. *1 Kings 20. 28,42.*

8. Idolatry, Blasphemy, Heresie, venting corrupt and pernicious Opinions, that destroy the Foundation, open contempt of the Word preached, Profanation of the Lords day, disturbing the peaceable Administration and Exercise of the Worship and holy things of God, and the like, are to be restrained and punished by Civil Authority. *Deut.13. 1 Kin.20. 28, 42. Dan.3.29. Zech.13.3. Neh.13.31. 1 Tim.2.2. Rom.13.4.*

9. If any Church, one or more, shall grow Scismatical, rending it self from the Communion of other Churches, or shall walk incorrigibly or obstinately in any corrupt way of their own, contrary to the Rule of the Word; in such case the Magistrate is to put forth his Coercive Power, as the

matter shall require. The Tribes on
Josh.22. this side *Jordan* intended to make war against the other Tribes, for building the Altar of Witness, whom they suspected to have turned away thereby from following of the Lord.

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